

FOR INDUSTRIAL SITES

Joliet Leaders Urging Sale of Arsenal Land

By **ROBERT W. RICHARDS**
Chief, Copley Press
Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON—A tug of war was shaping up today between the Illinois State Conservation department and the Joliet Association of Commerce over use of approximately 2,600 acres of Joliet Arsenal property, declared surplus by the Army and turned over to the General Services administration for disposal.

This was revealed by Franklin Floete, General Services administrator in letters to Sen. Everett M. Dirksen (R-Ill) and several Illinois congressmen, including Reps. Noah M. Mason (R) of Oglesby, representing the 15th Illinois district, and House GOP whip-Leslie C. Arends of Illinois, ranking minority member of the House Armed Services committee.

Floete noted that the Army had declared the land surplus, with approval of the Armed Services committee, for the

conservation of wildlife by the state of Illinois, which had been using the tract for that purpose since 1948.

Between that year and 1956, he said, the state had spent \$293,000 improving and developing the property for wildlife conservation. The state has reported, he said, some 400,000 hunters have used the area since it was under state administration.

A move by the Illinois Conservation department for the transfer of title to 2,600 acres from the federal government to the state under an act of Congress for wildlife conservation has been approved by Interior Secretary Fred A. Seaton.

More recently, however, a number of members of the Joliet Association of Commerce have intervened to urge that the land be sold for industrial development and returned to county and state tax rolls.

Floete noted that he and

other General Services officials have discussed such disposal of the surplus land with G. W. Cox, assistant to the president for industrial development of the Santa Fee railroad.

The office of Congressman Mason reported that among Joliet Association of Commerce members writing that the property be offered for public sale are: Caterpillar Tractor Co., Coles Cranes Inc., Folger Adam, chairman of the Joliet Regional port authority; Berthelsen Engineering Co., and the Joliet 7-Up Bottling Co.

The tenor of the letters, it was said, calls for transfer of the property to the Joliet Port authority for sale to industries, providing more employment for Joliet and more tax revenue.

There would be no tax revenue for the county or state if the Illinois conservation department obtains title.